

1 in 4

Mental health and your church
A resource for church communities.



"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." John 10:10

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FORWARD

“The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell or a Hell of Heaven.” John Milton “Paradise Lost”

Sometimes I’m up; sometimes I’m down, but rarely for too long. What I do know from years of travelling with people through their ups and downs is that the highs and lows can often be crippling. The pit of depression and anxiety can be dark and overwhelming and I suspect that our stressed out, worn down, beaten up world, is gradually claiming more and more victims and dragging them into that pit of despair. In our minds, Heaven, all too easily, becomes a living Hell.

I’ve also learned that such feelings can overwhelm anyone at anytime and none should take mental well-being for granted, and certainly no one should ever imagine themselves superior to those who suffer. If you are blessed with a sense of joy and lightness of spirit, then truly thank God for that and be ready to uphold those less fortunate.

That’s what this resource material is for.

- a) to inform around the issue of mental health
- b) to encourage the Church to do what Jesus did, who helped many people to discover a sense of mental health and well-being.

I would like to commend the work of the Mental Health Forum to the Diocese and encourage all to read this resource material and allow Christ to inspire you to continue his healing work.

**The Venerable Ian Bishop
Archdeacon of Macclesfield
Chair of the Committee for Social Responsibility, Diocese of Chester.**

Much of what is contained in this document is drawn from *Promoting mental health: A resource for spiritual and pastoral care*, published jointly by The Church of England, National Institute of Mental Health in England. It provides a range of information on mental health and its promotion; offers guidance and suggestions on how to create a welcoming environment, and planning and delivering training in addition to outline programmes for activities and workshop sessions. There are also several information sheets providing facts about mental health and its promotion. Copies of this document can be downloaded from:

www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/homeaffairs/mentalhealth

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESOURCE

We have a Christian calling to heal and to care, including healing and caring for those with mental health problems. Part of that pastoral ministry requires us to mitigate those circumstances which may cause poor mental health and to work to create those conditions which promote good mental health. We are part of a dynamic which sees all things being reconciled, and made new, in Christ (Colossians 1.20, Revelation 21.5).

Good mental health is not just a matter for doctors and psychiatrists. We are all involved, directly or indirectly, wittingly or unwittingly, in matters affecting the mental well-being of others and ourselves. In partnership with mental health professionals and those working for stronger communities, churches can do much to promote mental health.

It is clear that many aspects of church and parish life help create the conditions for good mental health. Parishes can also offer valuable support to those with an existing mental health problem and to their carers. However, there are also many who feel uncertain about how best to help and have requested further support and information in order to feel equipped and resourced to deal with the issues and challenges. This document is a response to this request and is the outcome of the work of a Special Interest Group of the Committee for Social Responsibility (CSR), set up in 2008 to produce a resource for parishes within the Diocese of Chester.

Aims of this resource

The aim of '1 in 4' is to:

- highlight the valuable role of faith communities in promoting mental health,
- reduce fear and stigma, by raising awareness, knowledge and understanding of mental health issues,
- share information and advice about the many parish initiatives that already exist,
- encourage you as a church community to consider what you can do to develop new ways of reaching out to people with mental health needs.

Who this document is for

This document is intended to be used by clergy, youth workers, pastoral workers, welcome and worship teams, sides people, PCC members, leaders of prayer and ministry groups and all those who have a particular interest in mental health issues.

What this document is not

This document is not intended to create clinical expertise. It is presented as a basic guide with links to other sources of information and help. Some parish members may be interested in developing a more specialised ministry for those with mental health problems, for which some form of training would be required. Such training and developments are beyond the scope of this document.

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

'Mental health is the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of wellbeing and an underlying belief in our own worth and the dignity and worth of others.' (Church of England, Archbishops' Council, 2004, p. 29)

There are many factors which influence our mental health and well being: social, cultural, economic, political and biological. Mental health affects how we think and feel about ourselves and others, how we interpret events, how we learn, how we cope with life events and how we develop and sustain relationships.

Mental health difficulties are common, with one in four people experiencing some type of mental health problem at some stage in their lives.

Many people suffer with their mental health for many years without it affecting their ability to cope, hold down employment or fulfil their responsibilities because they have found a way to manage their difficulties. Church communities can develop sensitivity to this possibility.

HOW PARISHES CAN PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health promotion can challenge the stigma, fear and misunderstanding surrounding mental health issues. The Church can play a vital role in this respect. The life of the parish community, together with the resources and actions of individuals, can both help to prevent mental health difficulties as well as helping with the management of and recovery from mental illness.

By demonstrating acceptance and understanding, people with mental health difficulties may be encouraged to see the Church as a sanctuary and feel encouraged to seek help. The knowledge and reassurance of an eternal source of unconditional love and the experience of non-judgemental compassion and understanding from Christians can be an enormous comfort and source of hope. Parishes can provide valuable emotional support, or spiritual guidance, to people with mental health problems as well as their carers and families and by recognising symptoms of mental illness, parishes can also encourage referral to other forms of professional help when needed. The Church community can help in a number of important ways:

Offer friendship.

Churches can offer informal neighbourly care, openness and friendship to people who may be vulnerable.

Value people with mental health problems.

The church can provide a safe and welcoming community and help to improve quality of life. Equally, people with mental health problems can offer a valuable contribution to the life and work of the church. For example, by sharing their experiences and participating in communal and spiritual life.

Promote the mental health of the whole community.

The church is an important setting for promoting mental well-being for everyone. Activities and groups that may take place in church premises, for example youth groups, older people's groups, drop-in centres, mother and toddler groups, user and self-help groups and other community activities can contribute to mental well-being and help reduce social exclusion.

Raise awareness about mental health and challenging stigma.

Talking openly about the mental health needs of the whole community fosters understanding of the issues and dispels notions of them and us'. Training or discussion groups help to raise awareness and dispel myths. Accepting and welcoming **all** people sends a powerful message to those who fear or mistrust others. Ask your parish to sign up to 'Time to Change', England's biggest ever mental health anti-stigma campaign. Follow the link (www.time-to-change.org.uk) for ideas, free resources, news and lots more

Support people at key points in their lives.

People are likely to turn to their faith community at times of great change or crisis in their lives, or to mark deeply significant events like birth, marriage or bereavement. In the case of bereavement, ministers have an important role to play in increasing awareness of the need for time to grieve, for both adults and children, and in assisting access to practical help and support during bereavement. Support at these times can strengthen the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

Link people to mental health services.

For some people, a church may be a first point of contact and can act as a link and referral system to statutory mental health services and other sources of support in the community.

Offer emotional, social and practical support.

The church community provides an informal setting for users and carers to meet with others. Church members may make pastoral visits to vulnerable people. A range of help and advice can be on hand. For some people, particularly those who are isolated or vulnerable, the church may be the only place where they can meet socially and one of the few sources of information and support.

Provide spiritual resources.

It is known that spiritual resources can play an important role in the survival strategies of people with mental health problems by providing:

- Wider feelings of sharing and community.
- A source of personal inner strength, fostering both perseverance and forgiveness.
- Faith as a source of comfort and support.

Offer the sacred space of a church building.

Some find a church has a special positive atmosphere or aura. It might bring back particular memories of baptisms, weddings or funerals which connect them with significant others. Many churches are symbolic in their design, pointing to possibilities beyond themselves. The size of a building can encourage a sense of the transcendent. Art, artefacts and music, may provide encouragement and inspiration. The sense of connectedness to other people, to tradition, to oneself or to God or Other may be achieved more readily in a church building for some people. Thus churches, particularly OPEN churches play a part in promoting mental health.

Support Carers.

Churches can have a role in supporting Carers. Very often they are family members, but may also be neighbours or other friends, who give help and support in a wide variety of ways. Many Carers experience isolation, physical ill-health and a sense of having to put their own life on hold. Their needs are often overlooked. A church community can be a safe place where they can express their feelings openly.

Hold a special service

Churches could hold a special service to mark World Mental Health Day (10 October) and to celebrate our commitment and work in promoting good mental health. The service is one way to remember all who have Mental Health difficulties and those who seek to help and work with them. For more information on worship resources go to www.chester.anglican.org/csr and click on 'Counselling services'. Under the 'Resources' section is a link to the Church of England's worship pack, and under 'World Mental Health Day service' is an example order of service.

For more detailed information, advice, guidance and ideas on setting up training, events, workshops etc, The Church of England Archbishops' Council document, sections 2 - 4, referred to on page 3 is a valuable resource.

SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING MENTAL DISTRESS

Everyone has times when they feel a bit down or fed up, or life may feel too busy and stressful. However, when these feelings persist and continue for some time, this *may* indicate an underlying mental health problem. Often it will be those closest to the person who may notice a significant change in behaviour or mood. Some of the more obvious signs *may* include frequently feeling tired or in pain, a change in how drugs or alcohol are used, lack of confidence, poor morale.

What Parishes Can Do

- Consider what support systems can be offered. For example: friendship, practical help and information about local agencies. Many people with mental health problems withdraw from life. Encouraging them to talk things over or to get out may offer them a change of perspective or environment and help them reconnect with daily life. It is also important to respect that the person may prefer time to be on their own and may need space and privacy.
- Be aware of other sources of professional help and support in the area, and encourage them to access these.
- Be alert to signs of distress but do not try to diagnose or attempt to treat the problem.
- **Active Listening.** Active listening is a skill all can learn and apply. The Acorn Listening course is recommended for Christian listeners. For more information visit www.acornchristian.org

When Someone Becomes Distressed

- Ask the person how you can help and what they would find useful. Do not assume they want to talk to someone, they may prefer time to be alone.
- Ask if there is anyone they would like to be contacted, for example a family member or close friend.
- Make space for them to express emotions or let off steam in private if necessary.
- Discuss with them the possibility of seeking professional help. Encourage them to get help from their GP or other health professional.
- Offer to accompany the person to their GP/health professional if appropriate.
- Rarely, someone may be in crisis. If this happens, contact the person of their choice or contact the emergency services/A & E at hospital or encourage them to see their GP.

Please also refer to pages 19 and 23 for guidance on issues to consider with regard to inclusivity and safe practice.

COMMON MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

It is beyond the scope of this document to provide detailed information about mental health problems. The following is a brief guide only. Further information can be found at www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/homeaffairs/mentalhealth or at any of the websites listed in the Signposting section on page 24.

What parishes can do:

- Encourage exercise and self-care.
- Consider setting up a self-help group. Given the tendency for such conditions to encourage withdrawal from social situations, a church group can provide emotional and practical support to counteract this.
- Encourage the person to keep in contact with other people.
- Encourage people to seek appropriate support and treatment from their GP or talking therapies and to take any medication if prescribed.
- A number of self-help books are also available. (See signposting section page 24)

DEPRESSION

Depression is one of the most common mental health problems and affects 20 per cent of women and 10 per cent of men at some point during their lives. One in twenty of all adults are estimated to be experiencing depression at any one time. Much depression goes unrecognised and undiagnosed. It affects all sections of the population, including both those who profess a religious faith and those who don't.

Our mood naturally varies over time and from day to day and everyone gets 'down' or 'fed up' sometimes. We may get disheartened about something that happens or when things do not go the way we would have liked. Although people often say I'm depressed to mean these things, this would not usually be what is called clinical depression and is simply part of the normal ups and downs of life.

Real depression is unlike any short-lived experience of sadness. It is a protracted very low state of mind often with no clear reason or explanation. A person with depression needs help and support. Unfortunately, there continues to be a social stigma about any mental health problem, so some people may be reluctant to seek help, or even admit there is a problem in the first place. The advice: 'Pull yourself out of it' is ineffective, and may actually make things worse.

Symptoms

People with depression usually have a number of symptoms, which include low mood, loss of interest and enjoyment in life, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, self-hatred, tearfulness, poor concentration, reduced energy, reduced or increased appetite and weight, sleep problems, anxiety, inability to make decisions and/or plan for the future.

How to help

Recognising that someone is experiencing depression and supporting them to seek professional help and treatment will speed their recovery (or at least help them manage the symptoms) as well as reducing the risk of relationship breakdown, sickness, accidents, alcohol and drug misuse, job loss and suicide. People who live with, or care for, a person with depression may also need support.

Other sources of help

The Depression Alliance is a major source of information and help. For more information visit www.depressionalliance.org.

A number of self-help books and websites are also available (See signposting section page 24)

STRESS

Stress is the word that many people use when they are comparing the demands of their life with how they think they can cope. If the demands appear to be too great or overwhelming, the person may feel unable to cope. The ability to cope varies from person to person and the same demanding task may inspire and motivate one person but another person may be completely overwhelmed. Problems occur when the demands exceed our resources, whether this is of time, money, knowledge, skills, influence etc. Equally, an accumulation of small stresses can be just as troublesome as one larger life event.

Harmful stress produces anxiety which results in physical and psychological responses. In the short term this is very useful but in the long term, there is the risk of mental and physical health problems such as depression, anxiety, heart disease.

Symptoms

Stress can affect the way people think, feel and behave. It can lead to changes from the norm in people's behaviour i.e. sleep disruption, increased caffeine/alcohol/tobacco consumption, increased hours engaged in work, failure to take holidays and time off, increased irritability, poor memory or concentration, verbal or physical aggression, raised heart rate, poor physical health.

How to help

Stress is not a recognised mental health condition, but it does have the capacity to be a significant risk factor in the onset of other problems. Early recognition of the signs is important. People suffering from stress should be encouraged to seek help from a counsellor/therapist or their GP. Support from friends and family is important to help the person reduce the stress in their life. Physical activity as well as relaxation techniques can also help to reduce stress levels.

ANXIETY

Anxiety is a normal and biologically essential experience arising in response to stress or uncertainty. No-one is completely devoid of anxiety. Anxiety becomes a problem, in mental health terms, when it unduly prevents us from doing the things we would reasonably want to do as part of our lives; e.g. spending disproportionate amounts of time checking taps are turned off before going out, not wanting to do ordinary daily tasks e.g. shopping. Unhelpful anxiety is therefore given diagnostic labels, usually describing its outcome. For example, the person suffering with agoraphobia is anxious about open spaces and the market place, the person with arachnophobia is not at all keen on spiders, not only having a strong anxiety reaction when seeing one but avoiding going to a place where one might be. These labels are called anxiety disorders. Generalised anxiety is a term used when anxiety is experienced all the time.

Symptoms and how to help

The symptoms of anxiety may be similar to those listed for stress. Again, recognition of the signs and self-help using some of the resources listed in the Signposting section of this document or talking to a counsellor/therapist or GP should be encouraged. The GP may also prescribe medication if appropriate.

SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

Some people suffer from a severe and enduring mental illness. It is likely they will already have medical support in place to help them manage their symptoms and they should be accepted and included just as much as anyone else in the church community. Please refer to the Signposting list on page 24 for further information about organisations that may be able to offer help and advice.

GOOD PRACTICE IN RELATION TO THE LANGUAGE WE USE

Most mental health problems result from a complex interaction of biological, social and psychological factors and it can be misleading to think of someone's problems solely as an illness that requires medical treatment. Some people, therefore, prefer to use the terms mental or emotional distress rather than mental illness.

It is also important that we avoid referring to a person solely by their mental health problem. For example, if we refer to someone as a 'schizophrenic' or 'depressive' this is stigmatising and can be damaging. It is important to look at the **whole** person, not just a label. We wouldn't call someone experiencing cancer, a 'cancer' but we may say that person has cancer. Similarly, it is important to recognise that the mental health problem is only one part of the person and for many may only be a relatively small part. It is also important to think about our everyday language; words like, 'nutter', 'crazy', 'mental' are degrading and hurtful.

Always refer to the person, not the label. For example: a friend, nurse, teacher, colleague etc experiencing mental distress, depression or schizophrenia, rather than a 'depressive' or a 'schizophrenic'.

IT WORKED FOR US

The following pages provide information on support groups currently running across the Diocese. They are intended to inspire you with information and ideas that you may want to adapt or use in your own parish. The contacts listed will be pleased to provide further information and advice to help you with your project and we provide guidance to help you plan and set up a project on page 21. Please also read page 19 'Valuing difference and diversity' which gives information on how to ensure equality of access and page 23 which gives details of current practice and guidelines to consider when working with vulnerable adults.

Oasis

Where? Christ Church, Higher Bebington.

Further contact details: Ted Jones, 0151 645 0617 or Jill Wright, 0151 334 8274

The way it was set up: We simply said we would open the church for 2 hours once a month for people suffering from anxiety or depression or caring for others. We invited speakers for the first few sessions and made sure there were at least a couple of church leaders present who would be prepared to talk to people one-to-one if necessary. We advertised with posters in the parish and in our magazines and newsletters and on the website.

We believed it would work because we had held a number of services for World Mental Health Day and always had a very positive response. People who came said they would like to see more support. We had two leaders of our congregation with experience of mental health issues willing to take on the group.

The strengths of the project are that the informal set-up allows people with mental health challenges to talk to each other in ones and twos – which they often find really encouraging. We have two church leaders (Readers) willing to continue running the group and have attracted interest from Wirral MIND and other groups.

Possible pitfalls can be:

- We are not very good at publicising the group in the community.
- We don't always remind members in good time about the meetings.
- It is sometimes difficult to find suitable speakers to attend our meetings.
- It is also necessary to remind them near to the date that they have agreed to come. On one occasion we were let down by a guest who would not answer our phone calls after the event.

Additional information: As we use our church building we are able to keep costs to a minimum. We only need to provide tea, coffee and biscuits unless there is some form of arts and craft activities in which case we need to factor in these costs.

Overall we think the project is fulfilling a need within our church community as well as the wider community, although it is still in its infancy. This is borne out by the comments we receive.

“It’s OK Club”

Where? St. Cuthbert’s Church, Cheadle.

Further contact details: Tricia Berry, 0161 485 3250, e-mail: tricia@cheadle.org

The way it was set up: We had a contact at MIND who was keen to have a centre in our area. We asked for volunteers and had three afternoon sessions of training with MIND’s director. We planned to meet fortnightly on a Wednesday afternoon from 2pm to 4pm and originally a worker from MIND would be present. We advertised it in local GP surgeries and the local mental health resource centre and we feature in all the local MIND literature. Nineteen people attended the training afternoons. We applied and received a grant of £300 from our local volunteer organisation in Stockport which helped with buying games and art materials.

We believed it would work because we felt there was a real need for somewhere for folk experiencing mental distress to meet in a relaxed setting and we had recently had a church refurbishment and wanted to use the premises to benefit our local community.

The strengths of the project are that the folk who help to run it are very regular and enthusiastic. We do a variety of activities art and crafts, cooking, creative writing and reading stories and poetry, listening to music, playing board games. We have been on theatre trips to our local amateur dramatic theatre and joined in some activities at church e.g. Easter and Christmas celebrations. A number of our members are Christians and attend various churches.

Possible pitfalls can be:

- A number of the original helpers felt it wasn’t the right thing for them - it is really important to have a good number of helpers so that it is possible to have one to one chats and there is no pressure to attend every fortnight.
- Someone needs to be able to spend time in the kitchen because there needs to be tea and coffee available all the time.
- The promise of someone from MIND attending each time only lasted for the first year but we find that we manage very well without.
- Doing art and craft takes up storage space which has been a challenge to us.
- Expect members to come and go and some people like a telephone reminder: a leaflet with our dates of meeting is freely available.
- Advertising doesn’t seem to increase numbers that is mainly done by word of mouth.

Additional information: We charge £1 and we have had no problems covering our costs though the church gives us free premises and tea and coffee.

Overall we think the project is very worthwhile. There are a lot of very lonely and needy folk out in the community. We try to show them the love of Jesus and make ourselves available to talk about our faith if and when folk want to discuss spiritual issues.

Anti-depression workshop

Where? St Peter's Community Hall, Minshull Vernon, Crewe.

Further contact details: The Revd Dr Philip Goggin, 01270 522213

The way it was set up: I was aware of the prevalence of depression, both within church membership and in the community generally. I advertised the formation of the group in a locally distributed advertising magazine (free for charities), explaining that the group would meet regularly and would offer mutual and self-help based on what individuals chose to share and that there would be no specifically Christian input. The group was made up of people who responded. Additional people have trickled in over the 2 years we have been operating. We have 9 members now, not all of whom attend on any given occasion. Sessions are held once a month, but there are additional private meetings which some individual members have arranged between themselves.

We believed it would work because it was a simple idea which built on the well-established principles of group dynamics in other support groups. It did not require particular training or expertise in depression (though as a non-professional I have made a study of depression). A key skill for the leader, which is generic to many tasks, is that of facilitator, and this is a skill I have tried to master over the years.

The strengths of the project are that:

- Friendship is at the heart of the project
- There is genuine interest in what people contribute
- No one is pressurised
- Individuals learn from what other group members say to them and through thinking about the circumstances of others.

Possible pitfalls can be:

- Confidentiality
- Occasionally one person may take up excessive time, or try to impose their solution to another's problem
- Simplistic Christian thinking could be a problem if the group were overtly Christian (which this is not).

Additional information: There is no cost to people who attend. In effect, the costs are borne by the parish. No one in 2 years has ever suggested that the church should not be doing this. Links to other local mental health organisations are helpful.

Overall we think the project is well regarded by users (who would not continue to attend otherwise) and fits well with the work the parish is trying to do in the community (eg Mums and Tots, community activities for older people, a new community hall is under construction).

Community Café

Where? Great Moor, Stockport

Further contact details: Canon Diane Cookson, The Vicarage, 22 St. Saviour's Road, Great Moor, Stockport SK2 7QE. 0161 483 2633

The way it was set up: I had a meeting with Stockport Care Schemes and outlined my idea of having a Community Cafe provided by the church and suggested they came on board by supplying transport and highlighting the various support groups and help agencies in the area. Each week we have someone with their notice boards and leaflets.

We believed it would work because St. Saviour's Mission Statement is 'Passion for Christ, Compassion for all'. We felt it would work because there are so many hurting, lonely and vulnerable people who could meet up for food and fellowship whilst having the opportunities to see what help they could tap in to.

The strengths of the project are that:

- It is run entirely by volunteers
- Clergy are available if someone wants to talk
- Meal Deal (main meal, dessert, fruit and drink for just £3)
- Transport available
- People's needs, can be met through the support schemes they will find here.

Possible pitfalls can be: We have not encountered any yet. We thought Health & Hygiene might have condemned our old kitchen, so we built a new one, so I suppose you would need to check that everything is in order where food is being prepared.

Additional information: Good planning and regular meetings with the volunteers.

Overall we think the project fully embraces our mission statement.

Carers' Drop In

Where? Holy Trinity Church Stalybridge

Further contact details: Christine Haworth, 0161 303 8713

The way it was set up: Connection between myself and Carer Development Worker for Tameside together with the offer of premises at Holy Trinity Church.

We believed it would work because carers who look after someone with mental health issues become isolated and do not always know where to go for support.

The strengths of the project are that people can talk to others in similar circumstances and offer mutual support. They can receive helpful information. It is a place to laugh and relax. Something to look forward to.

Possible pitfalls can be low numbers because of caring difficulties.

Additional information: We meet in the church lounge with three volunteers. Tea and cake always provided. Sometimes we have a meal out together. One of the volunteers completed a food hygiene course.

Overall we think the project is going well. It is helping carers to relax, off-load and find mutual support. Numbers are low and it would work better with more members but it is valuable nonetheless.

Memory Cafe

Where? St Mary Magdalene Church Centre, Ashton on Mersey, Sale

Further contact details: St Mary's Church Centre, 0161 291 9283

The way it was set up: It was set up by the Impact (social justice) group at St Mary Magdalene at the suggestion of one of the members who is a local GP. It is a place where people with memory loss symptoms can come with their friends, family or carers to meet and socialise. We have a cafe area at the church centre which provides an ideal venue. The remit was to provide the gift of a warm and hospitable environment in which to meet and have a couple of hours of fun and friendship with people in a similar situation. The local Alzheimer's society was contacted and also the local authority and medical centres. We produced a flyer and a business card advertising the cafe.

We believed it would work because there was no other comparable facility in the area and dementia sufferers and their carers are very restricted as to the places where they can go to find any social or mental stimulation. Carers find it difficult to provide things to do for the person they care for and their own social life can be severely restricted. We felt we had very good facilities which could be used for this purpose and a team of willing volunteers.

The strengths of the project are that it is very informal and undemanding. Few resources are required. A lot of each meeting is taken up with chatting and eating homemade cakes, but there is also an optional structured activity for part of the time. This might be a craft, game, quiz, sing-along, or whatever the cafe users request.

Possible pitfalls can be: having enough people to staff the cafe each month. Some people may have transport problems. Funding needs to be worked out. It took 2-3 months to build up the numbers attending, so that there was a good atmosphere.

Additional information:

- **Venue:** St Mary Magdalene Church Centre , cafe area.
- **Time:** 1.30 – 3.30 pm, monthly, 2nd Wednesday in the month.
- **Staffing:** 3 or 4 volunteers per month, to make refreshments and initiate activities.
- **Costs:** Hire of the cafe, refreshments and craft materials. Relies on donations and some fund-raising.

Overall we think the project is working well since it began in March 2010. It is fulfilling a need and it is very enjoyable. There has been good feedback from our guests.

Knit and Natter

Where? Community Centre, Christ Church, Higher Bebington

Further contact details: Jill Wright, 0151 334 8274 or Parish Office, 0151 608 4429

The way it was set up: Jill had experience of another successful group in Bromborough and felt it would fulfil a need in the Bebington community and we were able to use the facilities of the new Community Centre. Another member of the congregation volunteered to help lead the group. We publicised it in the church newsletter and planned to meet once a month. Four members of Christ Church attended the first meeting and agreed the remit of the group.

Objectives

1. To provide an informal knitting group to be called 'Knit and Natter' enabling members to knit simple items for charity in congenial company over a 'cuppa'.
2. The group to be run by members of Christ Church, Higher Bebington.
3. The group to complement and interact with other existing support groups run by the church in the Community Centre, for example:- 'Oasis' Mental Health Support, Bereavement Support, Listening Service and Carers' Group.

How: Group meetings on Wednesday afternoon 1.30 – 3.30pm in the Community Centre. The first meeting was in October 2011 and initially the meetings were held on the first Wednesday of the month. In January 2012 this was increased to the first and third Wednesdays (twice a month). Each member donates £1.20 at every session in order to make a contribution towards the cost of refreshments, heating and lighting.

We thought it would work because when we carried out a needs survey of the area, when planning to build our new Community Centre, we discovered a number of people living on their own and a loss of a sense of community. This project aims to encourage a feeling of belonging and is intended for all members of the community and not just members of Christ Church.

The strengths of the project are that it is fairly simple to set up and run. (Wool and needles have been donated by parishioners and patterns provided initially by the group in Bromborough which is run by Churches Together in Bromborough and Eastham). Also similar groups in the area have been very successful.

Possible pitfalls can be: Difficulty in finding volunteers to run the group or other existing groups in the area may lessen the demand.

Additional Information: We use a room in our new Community Centre at Christ Church and are only charged a nominal rent. We provide our own tea, coffee and biscuits and are able to use the excellent kitchen facilities which are just next door. Members of the group all help in this.

Overall we think the project is successfully fulfilling a need in our church and community. The numbers attending are steadily increasing (in April 2012 we have 15 members coming to the sessions and several people knitting from home.) Those taking part experience a genuine feeling of fellowship and fun! We are able to raise cash for charity by selling the items we make and also donate a good number of the knitted garments (e.g. children's hats, scarves, gloves, jumpers, cardigans etc. and several knitted blankets) direct to charities both at home and abroad. Members experience a great deal of satisfaction in so doing! The whole effect is that of a therapeutic exercise and does complement other support groups already existing in the church. (Some members attend more than one group.) So far all the signs are very encouraging.

VALUING DIFFERENCE AND DIVERSITY - Issues to consider when planning an event or activity

Parking: Safe access across roads etc to premises, adequate parking for able bodied and Blue Badge holders.

Access into and out of the venue: Steps, ramp, upstairs, lifts, fire exits.

The room to be used: Adequate lighting, induction loop, size and lay out of room, lectern, number and design of chairs and seating.

Heating: Is it adequate for the people coming to the event? Use the appropriate size of room for the proposed event.

Facilities: Toilets, are they really accessible? Cloakroom areas?

Literature/handouts: Large print versions available (maybe establish the need in initial booking forms).

Using OHP or Power point: Prepare large print handouts (18 Arial) in case someone cannot see the screen, arrange clear view line to screen for everyone. Use yellow on blue or black on white for text, not red.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing: Make sure that there is an induction loop that works and make sure that all speakers use microphones. The speaker needs to repeat any questions asked from the floor so that people switched to the loop will be included. Offer signer and/or lip speaker. Send notes in advance to signing communicator. If worship is included make sure songs and readings given in advance. Contact Gail Robinson for more information (see end of section).

Timing of the event: Think about the timing of the event. Young people may not be able to attend if held in the middle of the afternoon? Elderly or disabled people would probably not attend if the event starts too early in the morning or is in the evening in the middle of winter and involves travelling.

Refreshments: If offering tea/coffee, have decaffeinated or fruit teas and water available too. If a need is shown on the application form, then provide wheat free biscuits. Make sure packet of straws and straight sided mugs available if disabled people attending. If lunch is to be included check what equipment is provided.

Other issues to consider

- If the event includes communion, are there wheat free wafers for those with gluten free diet?
- Provide a water bowl if any one of the five sorts of assistance dogs are to be present
- Ensure adequate directions to the venue and parking are provided
- Is there reserved parking for Blue Badge holders?
- What is the proximity of the venue to public transport?
- Is the content of the course appropriate for the target attendees? Consider context and if worship is to be included make sure it is appropriate.

- If appropriate, is there support present or follow up offered if vulnerable people attend the event? Is there someone present to note anyone needing support?
- Ensure that initial information is informative for both the recipient and the organiser
- When planning the information literature, use plain English and use a non-serif font with headings in Arial bold, two sizes larger than the body of text, not capitals or italics.
- If possible ask for preferred timings and locations and offer alternatives

Information to be included in disabled friendly literature:

- If the venue is wheelchair accessible.
- If there is Blue badge parking available.
- If induction loops are available.
- If the service will be signed.
- That details are available in large print (18), very large print (24) or Braille (which can be ordered from RNIB Transcription service in Tarporley).
- If there is a wheelchair available. It can be helpful for a disabled person to know this as it might save loading their own into and out of a vehicle and enable them to accept a lift.
- Are there any other additional needs of which you would like us to be aware or any other facilities which we could provide for you?
- Will you be coming in a car and could you offer a lift to another person attending the event?

PLANNING A NEW PROJECT

You may have been inspired by one of the ideas in this resource booklet or perhaps you would like to start something new. Whatever the case, before you begin, it is useful to engage in some project planning and thinking through the 5 W's is one way of creating a basic planning framework.

What do you want to do?

Why do you want to do it?

Who is it for? Who will run it?

When will it take place?

Where will it happen?

What kind of event or activity do you want to run?

Before deciding this, it is useful to think about what is already going on around you – it may not be explicitly Christian but perhaps your church could be involved in partnering another organisation? Once you have identified a need, consider who might be involved in meeting that need: the number of volunteers available may determine whether it's a one off event or run on a weekly, monthly basis. What is it going to cost? Funding may also impact on what you can do.

Why do you want to do it?

The answer to this may give you a clue to the nature of the event, its timings and who you invite. E.G if you want to engage in mission within the community you may choose to run an event outside of the church building. Other activities may be best served by a one off event.

Who is it for?

Lots of projects fall down because people say 'we could do that' but there isn't anyone who wants it or the time clashes with another event that those people would attend. See 'Inclusion issues when planning an event or an activity'. Again, it pays to do some good homework, talk to church members about what they would like. Go out into the community near you and canvas opinion about what is needed, the time, the place. The needs of those within the church and those beyond it may not be the same. That is why it is important to be clear about why you are doing something so that you can keep focused on that.

Who will run it?

Will it be volunteers? A worker? The Vicar (does it need to be)? Though the answer to this should not limit vision, for many projects, especially of the type that we are encouraging parishes to engage in, it is really important to keep your feet on the ground, who is available to help? Sustaining a small piece of work is much better than a big idea falling apart because of a lack of volunteers.

When do you want to do it?

Is it time critical e.g. tied to a major festival or to school holidays? (Note that school holidays also have an enormous impact on the availability of volunteers). Is there an external agenda driving this e.g. some kind of funding or the needs of a specific group? Is it weather dependent? Have you got time? Do you need to raise money first? Who the activity is aimed at will also affect the time of day of an event. An early morning breakfast club is unlikely to suit some older people and neither is a late night social.

Where will it happen?

By the time you have considered the other W's you may well be clear on this. It may be that a room at church is not necessarily the best venue though for many it is the only option. When choosing a venue it is important to consider transport, access, warmth, visual and hearing issues. (see Inclusion issues when planning an event or an activity' page 19).

Though there may be a lot to think about don't let it stop you from starting something new.

PROMOTING A SAFE CHURCH – A guide to working with vulnerable adults

Promoting a Safe Church builds on the companion volume 'Protecting all God's Children (2004)' and has been prepared in response to Department of Health guidance in 'No Secrets' (2000) and 'Safeguarding Adults', published by the Association of Directors of Social Services in 2005.

The document includes a policy for the Church of England on safeguarding vulnerable adults, examples of good practice and procedures to follow. **It says the Church should have a particular care for any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is permanently or for the time being unable to take care of him or herself, or to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.**

There are many circumstances that may render someone vulnerable. This policy and guidance booklet seeks to address proper pastoral conduct and guidance for those with pastoral responsibilities within the church and also what church officers and members should do when a person discloses abuse taking place outside the church, or within their family or care home.

The policy is summarised as:

- We are committed to respectful pastoral ministry to all adults within our church community.
- We are committed, within our church community, to the safeguarding and protection of vulnerable people.
- We will carefully select and train all those with any pastoral responsibility within the Church, including the use of Criminal Records Bureau disclosures where legal or appropriate.
- We will respond without delay to any complaint made that an adult for whom we were responsible has been harmed, cooperating with police and the local authority in any investigation.
- We will seek to offer informed pastoral care to anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate healing ministry.
- We will challenge any abuse of power by anyone in a position of trust.
- We will care for and supervise any member of our church community known to have offended against a vulnerable person.

In endorsing **Promoting a Safe Church**, the House of Bishops seeks to encourage safe pastoral care for all adults, raise awareness of the needs of vulnerable adults and promote good practice for those in positions of trust.

Promoting a Safe Church, priced £5.99, is published by Church House Publishing and available to buy from www.chpublishing.co.uk. It is also available from Christian bookshops including Church House Bookshop, 31 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BN, Tel. 0207 8981300.

SIGNPOSTING

Sometimes the prospect of helping people who are said to have mental health problems brings fear and anxiety linked to not knowing what to expect and what to do. The agencies listed, offer help with coping and provide information. This is a list of organisations that we, who are members of the Mental Health Forum, know about and may use. It is designed to help you to get started when seeking support in working with people with Mental Health problems. It is not definitive and if you have suggestions of organisations that can be added, we will be very grateful. It will also be useful if you include your local GP and Community Mental Health Teams.

Our local GPs are:	<i>List contact details and telephone numbers</i>
Our local Community Mental Health team is	<i>List contact details and telephone numbers</i>

Society	Description	Contact details	Your local contact
Alcoholics Anonymous	A fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.	www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk Helpline: 0845 769 7555	
Alzheimer's Society	Provides information on dementia, including factsheets and helplines.	www.alzheimers.org.uk Helpline: 0845 300 0336	
Anxiety UK	Used to be the National Phobia Society. Gives practical advice on anxiety problems.	www.anxietyuk.org.uk Helpline: 08444 775 774	
Association of Christian Counsellors	An organisation for supporting Christians who are counsellors and want to take a Christian perspective on their work.	www.acc-uk.org Tel: 0845 124 9569 Tel: 0845 124 9570	
BBC	A high quality source of general information.	www.bbc.co.uk/health/emotional_health/mental_health	

Society	Description	Contact details	Your local contact
British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies	The UK's major organisation concerned with the training, registration and discipline of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapists.	www.babcp.com Tel: 0161 705 4304	
British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy,	The UK's major organisation concerned with the training, registration and discipline of Counsellors/ Psychotherapists.	www.bacp.co.uk Tel: 01455 883300	
British Psychological Society	The representative body for psychology and psychologists in the UK. They publish a register of Chartered Psychologists.	www.bps.org.uk/ Tel: +44 (0)116 254 9568	
Cambridge University Counselling Service	This has a good supply of links to self-help resources.	www.counselling.cam.ac.uk Tel: 01223 332865	
Carers UK	Help and advice for carers and their families.	www.carersuk.org Helpline: 0808 808 7777	
Child Death Helpline	For anyone affected by the death of a child of any age.	www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk	
Childline	Free and confidential counselling service for children and young people.	www.childline.org.uk Freephone: 0800 282 986 Freemobile: 0808 800 6019	
Compassionate Friends Helpline	Support and friendship for bereaved parents and their families by those similarly affected.	www.tcf.org.uk Tel: 0845 123 2304	
Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)	Local NHS provider of treatment and help for people with mental health problems. Referrals to the CMHT are usually through GPs, but direct access is usually possible.	<i>We suggest parishes will find it helpful to know the contact detail of their local CMHT office; also it may be helpful to have the number of the Social Services Out of Hours provision.</i>	
Cruse Bereavement Care	One to one counselling and support, practical advice and information about bereavement.	www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk Tel: 0844 477 9400	
Depression Alliance	They work to relieve and to prevent depression by providing information and support services.	www.depressionalliance.org Tel (request information pack) 0845 123 23 20	
Depression Alliance	They work to relieve and to prevent depression by providing information and support services.	www.depressionalliance.org Tel (request information pack) 0845 123 23 20	

Society	Description	Contact details	Your local contact
Drinkline	Provides information and self-help materials, help to callers worried about their own drinking, support to the family and friends of people who are drinking, advice to callers on where to go for help.	0800 917 8282	
Drugs Helpline	Confidential telephone service which provides support and information about drugs with local and national services that can provide counselling and treatment.	www.talktofrank.com Tel: 0800 77 66 00	
Families Anonymous	Fellowship of family members and friends affected by another's abuse of mind-altering substances, or related behavioural problems.	www.famanon.org.uk Tel: 0845 1200 660	
Gamblers Anonymous (UK) Helpline	Fellowship of men and women who have joined together to do something about their own gambling problem and to help other compulsive gamblers.	www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk	
Get Connected	Free confidential help for under 25 year olds.	www.getconnected.org.uk Tel: 0808 808 4994	
Gingerbread Advice Line	Provide expert advice, practical support and campaign for single parents	www.gingerbread.org.uk Helpline: 0808 802 0925	
Harmless	Provides support, information, training and consultancy to people who self harm, their friends and families and professionals.	www.harmless.org.uk	
Hearing Voices Network	Offers information, support and understanding to people who hear voices and those who support them.	www.hearing-voices.org Tel: 0114 271 8210	
Living Life to the Full	A practical site written by Dr Chris Williams, a Christian psychiatrist. Can be used by general public or professionals.	www.livinglifetothefull.com	
Marriage Care	Helps people prepare for, achieve and sustain successful marriages and supports them should they experience marital breakdown by providing relationship counselling.	www.marriagecare.org.uk Tel: 020 7371 1341	

Society	Description	Contact details	Your local contact
Men's Advice Line	A confidential helpline for male victims of domestic violence and abuse.	www.mensadvice.org.uk Tel: 0808 801 0327	
Mental Healthcare	Information for family members and friends of people who have a diagnosis of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or another illness that may result in the symptoms of psychosis.	www.mentalhealthcare.org.uk	
Mental Health Foundation	Good information web site.	www.mentalhealth.org.uk Tel: 020 7803 1100	
Mind	A well known and long established general mental health organisation.	www.mind.org.uk Helpline: 0300 123 3393	
Mood Gym	A free, practical site, focusing on depression.	www.moodgym.anu.edu.au	
NHS	UK's largest source of help for people with mental health problems. They also have statutory responsibilities.	www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk Tel: 0845 4647	
No More Panic	Many articles to download on anxiety related problems.	www.nomorepanic.co.uk	
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust	Good range of self-help and information leaflets on common mental health problems.	www.ntw.nhs.uk Tel: 0191 213 0151	
NSPCC	Protects children across the UK and offers a wide range of services for children and adults.	www.nspcc.org.uk Tel (for help and advice): 0808 800 5000	
OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) Action	Provide support and information to anybody affected by OCD.	www.ocdaction.org.uk Tel: 020 7253 5272	
Parentline Plus Helpline	A national charity providing help and support in all aspects of family life.	www.parentlineplus.org.uk Tel: 0808 800 2222	
Patient UK	General health site. Many mental health problems have physical health elements.	www.patient.co.uk	
Rape Crisis	Raise awareness and provides a range of specialist services for women and girls who have been raped or experienced another form of sexual violence.	www.rapecrisis.org.uk Tel: 0808 802 9999	

Society	Description	Contact details	Your local contact
Royal College of Psychiatrists	Good literature for people who have, or support, people with Mental Health problems.	www.rcpsych.ac.uk Tel: 020 7235 2351	
Samaritans	Offers confidential support 24 hrs a day.	www.samaritans.org Tel: 08457 90 90 90	
SANDS: Still Birth and Neonatal Death Society	Provides support for anyone affected by the death of a baby.	www.uk-sands.org Helpline: 020 7436 5881	
SANE	Awareness raising and support organisation for people affected by severe mental health problems.	www.sane.org.uk Tel: 0207 375 1002	
SignHealth	Healthcare charity for deaf people – a counselling service is available.	www.signhealth.org.uk Phone: Voice 01925 652520 Minicom 01925 652529	
SOBS: Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide	Meets the needs and breaks the isolation of those bereaved by the suicide of a close relative or friend.	www.uk-sobs.org.uk Tel: 0844 561 6855	
The Centre for Anxiety Disorders and Trauma	NHS site with strong connections with the Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College London. Its information based on current research and evidence.	http://psychology.iop.kcl.ac.uk/cadat/general-information Tel: 020 3228 2101 or 020 3228 3286	
Time to Change	National campaign to change the stigma and discrimination of mental health. Useful website with information, resources, ideas, stories etc.	www.time-to-change.org.uk	
UKCP	Concerned with the registration and discipline of Psychotherapists.	www.psychotherapy.org.uk Tel: 020 7014 9955	
Victim Support	National charity giving free and confidential help to victims of crime.	www.victimsupport.org.uk Tel: 0845 30 30 900	
Women's Aid	Works to end domestic violence against women and children.	www.womensaid.org.uk Tel: 0808 2000 247	
World Health Organisation	Excellent information about the definition of mental health problems and their prevalence.	www.who.int	
Young Minds (Parents Information Service)	Committed to improving the mental health and emotional well-being of all children and young people. Confidential support for anyone worried about the emotional problems or behaviour of a child or young person.	www.youngminds.org.uk Tel: 0808 802 5544	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EPILOGUE

We hope this will be a useful document that will help you to feel affirmed in the work you are already doing with regard to mental health, encouraged to build upon this or inspired to try something new. We are indebted to all members of the Mental Health Forum, past and present, who gave of their time and contributed to the planning and preparation of this document, together with those who encouraged and supported its preparation through feedback and editing. We should also like to thank all those parishes who shared information and ideas about their projects.

The Mental Health Forum is a sub-group of The Committee for Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR exists to resource and support parishes encouraging faith in action.

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